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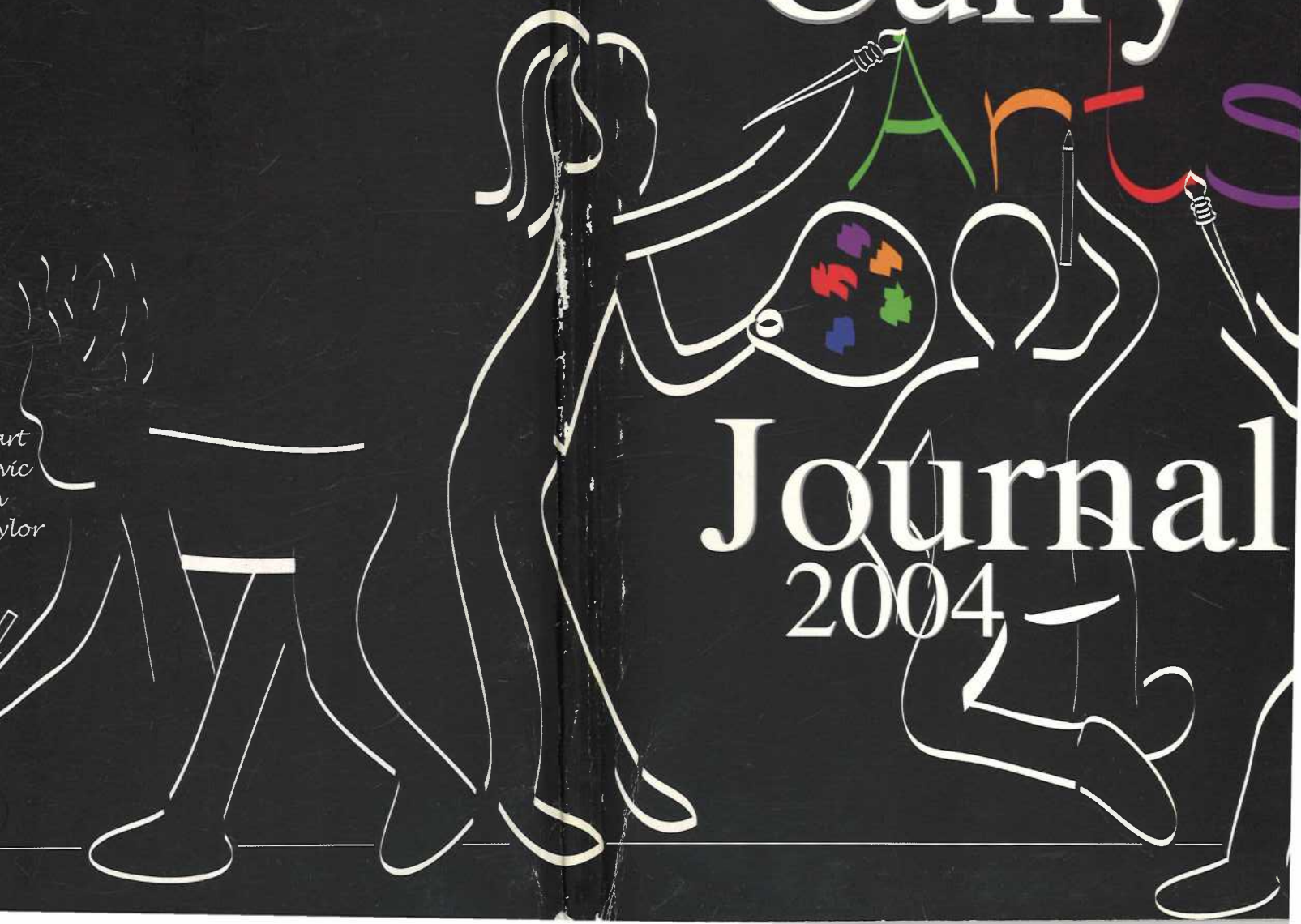
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2004



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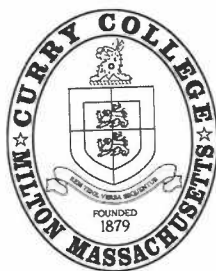
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Editors' Note

In past years, the production of the *Curry Arts Journal* has relied solely on student and faculty volunteers organizing themselves as an on-campus club. This *Journal* is the first one ever produced in an official classroom setting. Guided by Karen D'Amato, this year's faculty advisor and practicum instructor, we, as students, participated in the production of this edition by meeting three times a week, many of us for both the fall and spring semesters. Some of our duties included hand selecting the pieces that would be chosen by a faculty panel for publication as well as editing and formatting the pieces. We worked diligently in and out of the classroom to effectively produce the journal in a timely fashion.

Everyone on the staff is quite pleased with the interest students have shown in providing us submissions for all genres of work, including essays, poems, short stories, as well as artwork. Due to the high volume of submissions, the selection process was a difficult one, and oftentimes our staff relied on the choices of the faculty judges to make sure the strongest pieces were selected.

We want to take this time to thank all those who submitted any pieces to the *Journal*, and we strongly encourage those who were not selected this time around as well as those new voices we have yet to hear from to submit your work for consideration in future editions. Without your dedication and participation, this *Journal* filled with diverse writing and artwork would not be possible.

We also want to thank the following individuals who so generously extended their time and effort in the publication of this edition: literary faculty judges Jeannette DeJong, Dottie Fleming, Sandy Kaye, Jeannette Landrie, Lori Lubeski, David Miller, and Bill Russo for their time, their sensitive reading of texts, and their useful comments toward revision; faculty editors Jeannette DeJong and David Miller who generously extended their commitment to include editing and proofreading during the pre-production phase; and visual arts faculty judges Laurie Alpert, Jeannette Landrie, and Iris Morehouse for their time, expertise, and encouragement of student artists. We would especially like to thank Iris

Morehouse for providing us with eight creative cover designs which her students generated under her guidance, and Curry art student Brian Winchester for his conscientious work readying the *Journal's* artwork and formatting the *Journal's* text for publication. Brian also generously assisted practicum student Jonathan J. Reinhart with his creation of a *Curry Arts Journal* website.

Our thank yous would not be complete without acknowledging Jane Lawless and her library staff for providing the practicum with a friendly meeting place as well as access to a library computer lab, the Student Government Association for its continued commitment of funding, and Fran Gately and Rosemarie Valentino of the Office of Institutional Advancement for their continued commitment of resources to *Curry Arts Journal*. Finally, we would like to thank Dean David Fedo and English Coordinator Bill Russo for their institution of the *Curry Arts Journal* Practicum this past summer. The structured, for-credit arrangement enhanced our motivation and dedication as staff members as well as our investment in the finished product. We believe our consistent input greatly enhanced the quality of this year's edition. We hope you agree that due to our efforts and the support of the campus community *Curry Arts Journal 2004* is truly a quality student publication full of diverse themes and original voices.

Sincerely,

Mike Arienti
Ilene Correia
Tricia Earnshaw
Manu Mau'u
Teddie Michalos
Patty Miley
Brian O'Neil
Jonathan J. Reinhart
Nate Taylor
Jackie Wong

The *Curry Arts Journal* Student Staff

A Voyager Asks...

By Jane O'Connor

This year's Curry Arts Journal Practicum students have awarded "A Voyager Asks..." a special commendation for excellence in writing.

"How are you?"

Pissed-off.

Aggravated.

Terrified.

Heart-broken.

Drifting

in an ocean.

Preparing

for rough seas.

"I'm good, thanks.

How are you?"

Mora All Over Again

By Tricia Earnshaw

The alarm clock sounded at 9:30 a.m. throughout Mora's cold, empty apartment. Mora turned over in her bed and pressed the snooze, then went back to sleep. The sunlight streamed in through the blinds and made crooked ladder marks on the hardwood floor that spread across the length of her apartment. It was a clean, subtle space with neutral colors and small furniture.

Ten minutes later, the alarm clock sounded again. This time Mora rolled over and turned off the alarm. She got up sleepily and walked towards the bathroom across from her bed. She got undressed and took her usual shower. As she was getting out of the shower at 9:48, the phone rang. She answered it on the third ring.

"Hello?"

"Hi, baby. It's Allen."

"Oh, hey hon. What's up?"

"Well, I have to run an errand to Bob's Grocery, and I'll be a few minutes late meeting you. I'll only be about ten minutes. Bob's isn't that much out of my way."

"Oh, ok. It's no problem. Thanks for calling."

"Yeah, I'll see you soon. Love you."

"Love you, too. Bye."

"Bye."

Mora had been looking forward to seeing her fiancé since he had left on a business trip for two weeks. She was eager to begin planning their wedding.

Mora got dressed, grabbed her keys, and walked out the door at 9:55. Even though Allen would be late for their 10:00 breakfast, she figured she could get there on time and get a table for them.

When she arrived at the café, she chose a table, sat down, and ordered a cup of coffee. Ten minutes later, she looked at her watch. It read 10:12. Looking out the open windows, Mora saw Allen walking across the street bearing flowers. *That's so sweet.*

He brought me flowers. She smiled to herself. She got up and prepared to greet him at the door, when she heard the deafening sound of screeching tires. Instinctively, she looked up to see Allen being thrown in the air and over a large black pickup truck that had stopped short in front of the café.

"Noooooooooooo!" Mora screamed and ran out the door to her fiancé. Reaching the spot where he had landed, she saw Allen badly battered and his head at a strange angle. "Allen! Allen! Wake up! Please, honey, wake up!" Mora sobbed, dropping to her knees at the motionless form of her beloved beneath her. The driver of the truck stood pale above her, shaking his head and whispering, "I'm sorry," over and over again like a broken record. Ambulance sirens could be heard in the distance as Mora reached down and picked up a flattened daisy among several others and put it to her tear-stained cheek. Daisies were her favorite flower.

On the ambulance ride to the hospital, the EMT's told her that Allen had a broken neck, but was still alive. He would need surgery to repair the damage, but there was a possibility he might not make it. Mora's heart sank.

In the hospital, Mora paced back and forth in the waiting room for hours while Allen was in surgery. After what seemed like an eternity, a surgeon with a nametag of "Dr. Sheldon" came to see her.

"Mrs. Quinn?"

"Actually it's Ms. Callahan. We aren't married yet. How is he doing?" Mora asked tentatively, bolting up from her seat.

"Well, he did undergo surgery to fix his neck. We thought there might be a chance that he would make it because it looked like a normal break, but after further inspection," Dr. Sheldon started, stalling, but after seeing Mora's terrified face, continued on without any emotion showing, "a critical spinal disk was shattered and he was paralyzed from the shoulders down. However, that disk also caused fatal difficulties in repairing the damage. I'm sorry. He didn't make it through the surgery." The doctor finally finished, nothing sparking in his eyes. Mora went numb. She felt the room dissolve away in front of her eyes as the doctor continued. "There is some paperwork we would like you to fill out. You are

welcome to spend the night here. We know how hard a death can be." With that, the doctor left Mora alone in the melted room.

She couldn't cry. She couldn't feel. She could only nod slightly at the doctor's words and then slowly sink into the maroon-colored chair beneath her. Lying back in the chair, she stared blankly at the wall in front of her. Allen was gone. Allen. Was. Gone. The words would take a lifetime for her to process. Her muscles, already numb and lax, wrapped themselves around the rigid chair surrounding her. Surprising herself, she fell into a dreamless sleep.

The alarm clock sounded at 9:30 a.m. throughout Mora's cold, empty apartment. Mora turned over in her bed and pressed the snooze, then went back to sleep. The sunlight streamed in through the blinds and made crooked ladder marks on the hardwood floor that spread across the length of her apartment. It was a clean, subtle space with neutral colors and small furniture.

Ten minutes later, the alarm clock sounded again. This time Mora rolled over and turned off the alarm. She got up sleepily and walked towards the bathroom across from her bed. Suddenly, in mid-yawn, she stopped abruptly. Standing bolt upright, the memories from the night came crashing back to her. Allen was hit by a car. Allen's neck broken. Dr. Sheldon coming to her in the hospital and telling her Allen was dead. Allen was dead.

"Oh my God," she said out loud, putting a hand to her mouth. *But how did I get back here? I don't even remember coming home from the hospital.* Just then the phone rang. She looked at her alarm clock. It read 9:48. It felt like déjà vu, but she picked up the phone calmly.

"Hello?"

"Hi, baby. It's Allen."

Mora almost dropped the phone. "Allen? Oh my—this is really Allen?"

"Yes, of course it is, sweetie. Are you ok?" Allen's voice answered back with a slight laugh.

"Oh, I'm fine. Just...fine." Mora nearly broke down crying from relief. *It was all a dream.*

"Good! Well, I'm calling to let you know that I have to

run an errand to Bob's Grocery, and I'll be a few minutes late meeting you. I'll only be about ten minutes. Bob's isn't that much out of my way."

Allen isn't dead. I am meeting him at the café to make plans for our wedding. We are getting married. "Oh, that's great! I mean—no problem, hon; I'll see you soon."

"Yeah, I'll see you soon. Love you."

"Love you, too. Bye."

"Bye."

Mora's heart was lifted at the realization that it was all just a dream that she had had the night before. And she still had time for a shower before meeting him. She jumped into the shower and then got dressed after getting out at 10:00. Since Allen was going to be late, she didn't feel the need to rush. She was going to wait outside the café for him, so when she saw him crossing the street, she would run to him and wrap her arms around him with the joy of knowing he was alive. She left her apartment at 10:07 and strolled down the street to the café three blocks away. Her spirits were lifted; she felt in no rush to speed to the café. As she rounded the corner to the café, she glanced at her watch. It read 10:13. *He won't mind if I'm a little later than him. He'll be there waiting for me.* But her thoughts were interrupted abruptly by the flashing red lights of an ambulance. Mora's stomach lurched forward as she ran to the lights in front of the café. Upon further inspection, she found that there had been some sort of an accident. A pedestrian had been hit. A man standing in front of a black pickup truck was shaking his head, mumbling something, staring at the ground. She looked down at the pavement to see her fiancé lying in an unnatural position in the middle of the street with daisies littering the area around him.

"Oh God..." Mora murmured into her hand.

Pacing in the hospital, Mora thought of the situation. *Could my dream have been a premonition? No, premonitions aren't real. My dream felt real. I was doing the same things as today. The same exact things. Could I be reliving the days over again? That's crazy... Was my dream really a dream at all? This doesn't make sense; why would I be reliving days instead of—*

"Mrs. Quinn?" a voice broke into her thoughts suddenly. Mora turned to see Dr. Sheldon staring at her.

"He's dead. I know," she said morbidly.

"Yes... yes... he died—"

"On the operating table from a ruptured disk. Yes, I know."

"Oh... well... I'm sorry for your loss, but there is some—"

"Paperwork for me to fill out? I'll be here for the night."

"O-ok..." Dr. Sheldon said with utter shock registering on his face. He turned and left the room.

Maybe if I fall back to sleep, I'll wake up this morning again and be able to stop Allen from stepping in front of that truck. Then maybe I can live a normal life, Mora thought to herself, sitting down on a chair in the waiting room. She was feeling exhausted from the day and quickly drifted off to sleep with thoughts of saving Allen running through her head.

The alarm clock sounded at 9:30 a.m. throughout Mora's cold, empty apartment. Mora turned over in her bed and pressed the snooze, then went back to sleep. The sunlight streamed in through the blinds and made crooked ladder marks on the hardwood floor that spread across the length of her apartment. It was a clean—

Mora shot upright in her bed. Allen. Jumping out of bed and throwing on yesterday's clothes, Mora bolted out the door without a shower and headed to Allen's apartment. Upon reaching it at 9:50, she saw her fiancé leaving to head to Bob's Grocery.

"Allen!"

"Hey, baby, I just tried calling your house to tell you that I would be late—"

"It's ok. I'll come with you," Mora breathed and grabbed hold of his arm leading the way to Bob's.

At 10:15, Mora and Allen reached the café. Mora made sure to spend extra time looking at fresh fruit to steer clear of the café at 10:12, just in case. As they were leaving Bob's, Mora saw the black pickup truck speed by them. She breathed a sigh of relief. When they reached the café, they chose a table and sat down. As they ordered coffee, Allen complained of having a

headache.

"I'll just have some water please," he said to the waiter.

"You feeling ok?" Mora asked concerned.

"Yeah, I'm fine, just a headache," Allen smiled and reached across the table for Mora's hand. She gave his hand a slight squeeze, secretly relieved she was able to save him.

After coffee and talk of a wedding, they got up to leave. But before they could do anything else, Allen stopped and held his head.

"You ok, honey?" Mora asked alarmed.

"I don't know..." Allen trailed off, then suddenly collapsed onto the tile floor.

Sitting in the waiting room of the hospital, Mora knew her fiancé was dead. It appeared that there was no way of saving him. *How many more days do I have to suffer watching Allen die?* she asked angrily, to God maybe. Just then, Dr. Sheldon walked in.

"Mrs. Quinn?"

"Yeah," Mora said flatly.

"I'm sorry... but Allen was not able to make it through surgery. He had a brain aneurysm that ruptured in his skull. Do you know of any head surgeries he may have had?"

"No," she said becoming more interested.

"We found a scar in his scalp that would suggest that he has had some sort of surgery of the head in the past. Some scar tissue may have built up and then ruptured. Anyway, there is some paperwork that you can fill out. You can stay here for the night if you want."

"Yeah, ok."

Dr. Sheldon left Mora in the empty waiting room. This time, Mora was eager to fall asleep. *Maybe I can wake up tomorrow and kill myself this time...*

"Mrs. Quinn? Mrs. Quinn." Mora awoke to the sound of Dr. Sheldon's voice. As she woke up further, she glanced at her watch. It read 12:04 a.m.

"Actually, we were never married. You can just call me

Mora.”

“Oh, ok. Great, Mora. I’m Dr. Jack Sheldon, by the way. I have this paperwork for you now.”

“Thanks,” Mora said blankly and stared at the nonsense words on the pages.

“Hey, would you like to go down to the hospital caf and get some coffee or something?” There was something kind in the doctor’s eyes and tone when he said this.

“Uhh... sure,” Mora said as she reluctantly allowed Jack Sheldon to lead the way to the cafeteria.

Picture Perfect Past

By Tiffany LaCascia

Anything was possible—
she could be a doctor, the president, or a football player
when she grew older.

Imagination was precious—
she could fly, teach a class, or sing on Broadway
whenever she felt like it.

The world was not far—
she could be in Alaska in a blizzard or in the rainforest when it poured
as long as she made it back for dinner.

Every thought was likely—
she believed in a jolly old man and a woman that collected teeth for money,
with no questions asked.

The heart always won—
she didn’t have to look before she leaped or think before she spoke;
all was stimulated by instinct.

No one in the world was ever judged—
she always killed with kindness and knew sharing was not optional,
no matter whom she was with.

Dreams were always reachable—
she could lift the bar and defeat obstacles in her way
with self-confidence.

She was perfect in that picture—
young, beautiful, and flawless
at that moment.

Everything in her life was achievable and undemanding—
she has all qualities I lost and she is all I wish I could be
as I look at the picture of my past.

An In-Depth Analysis of Nella Larsen's Passing

By Thomas Sumner Bernstock

This year's Curry Arts Journal Practicum students awarded "An In-Depth Analysis of Nella Larsen's Passing" a special commendation for excellence in writing.

Passing, by Nella Larsen, is a rather intriguing novella on several different levels. On the one hand, Larsen brilliantly treats the "Tragic Mulatta" trope (a common theme in African American literature). At the same time, Larsen manages to seamlessly intertwine this common theme in African American literature with a theme that is indeed popular in all of American literature—the tragic tale of the ambitious social climber. And amidst these larger social issues, Passing provokes some serious questions about women, the motivations they have for marrying, and female sexuality.

Both of Larsen's main characters, Irene and Clare, are apparently capable of "passing" as white women. We find out that Clare is indeed a quarter-white—making her the "Tragic Mulatta" to speak of. Clare feels trapped—she feels like no matter what she does, she can't win. As a black girl growing up, she was treated differently by the other black girls because she was so light-skinned. And yet, she was still treated by white people in the same manner that they treated all other black people—that is to say, horribly and as second-class citizens.

So Clare decides to eliminate this dilemma by "passing" as a white woman and marrying a rich white man. However, this turns out not to be the perfect solution she thought it would be; in fact, it just creates another more complicated dilemma. For Clare now has everything she wants in terms of *material* needs, but the one thing that she has not counted on is how dearly she would miss the companionship of her African American acquaintances whom she can no longer openly associate with. It goes without

saying that she cannot allow her white husband and his friends to see her socializing with "Negroes." But what of *secretly* socializing with black friends? Those former acquaintances, who had already been a bit skeptical of the light-skinned Clare during their grade-school days together, are now utterly disdainful of a woman whom they see as rejecting her roots and being ashamed of her own culture. Clare laments this situation to Irene:

'But once I met Margaret Hammer in Marshall Field's... My dear 'Rene, I assure you that from the way she looked through me, even I was uncertain whether I was actually there in the flesh or not. I remember it clearly, too clearly' (Larsen 154-155).

So, as a result, Clare has sought out Irene—the one black woman who *will* still talk to her, and grudgingly at that—which, as we learn, sets in motion the events that eventually lead to her tragic demise.

Indeed, on another level, one can examine this novella without focusing on the races of the characters at all. That is to say that, race notwithstanding, the characters of this story are rather reminiscent of the intensely, indeed blindly, ambitious protagonists of great American authors such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Edith Wharton. In Ms. Wharton's The House of Mirth, the ravishing Lily Bart, despite the shortcomings of her economic and social stature, is able to use her beauty, charm, and social grace to court many "fine gentlemen." In Larsen's novella, yes, "passing" as white provides Clare with an opportunity to marry a white man. *But* it is Clare's stunning beauty, coquettish charm, and social grace that allow her to marry a rich and handsome white man of her choosing. When Irene informs Clare that "'I've everything I want. Except, perhaps, a little more money,'" Clare promptly responds, "'Of course...that's what everybody wants, just a little more money, even the people who have it... Money's awfully nice to have. In fact, all things considered, I think, 'Rene, that it's even worth the price'" (Larsen 160). Outwardly, Clare appears to be content with her choice to live as a white woman, but inside she is beginning to question whether it really *is* worth the price. Why else would she be risking everything just to spend

her weekends with Irene and her friends?

But, alas, Clare isn't the only character with flaws. Irene, upon closer inspection, is an extremely ambiguous person herself. Her own marriage to Brian is far from perfect: "Above everything else she had wanted, had striven, to keep undisturbed the pleasant routine. And now Clare Kendry had come into it, and with her the menace of impermanence" (Larsen 229). Larsen proves again to the reader that it would be rather naïve to look at this piece simply as a story about race. It is also about women, their motivations for marriage, and indeed, their dependence upon marriage. Irene may not have married for money, but she did marry for a sense of security and the promise of a stable routine. This very routine is threatened when she begins to suspect Brian of having an affair with Clare. Readers, along with Irene, are left to decide for themselves whether or not the two had the affair. However, it soon becomes apparent that, whether or not anything happened between Brian and Clare, Irene does not want to lose her husband. One could argue that Irene loves Brian too much to let him go or that she just cannot bear to lose him to *Clare*, but this reader believes that Larsen is saying something more: that she is, in fact, saying something about the dependence that women *of any color* in the 1920s (and for a long time after) had upon the men whom they married. At a time when women were not readily allowed into the work force, their lives became solely dependent upon finding a husband to provide for them; such issues as whether or not he was faithful or if they even loved him were but mere details.

Finally, Larsen's novella also subtly explores female sexuality by hinting at Irene's attraction to Clare. Granted, this is never outwardly stated, but it would be, once again, quite simply naïve to ignore Larsen's incessant sexual undertones and subtle hints at Irene's attraction to Clare. Shortly after Clare writes her an appealing letter, Irene discovers that her friend has requested her to direct her answer to the post office's general delivery—just to be sure her husband does not get a hold of it. Larsen writes, "That had angered Irene, and increased her disdain and contempt for the other. Tearing the letter across, she had flung it into the scrap basket..."

Most likely she and Clare would never meet again. Well, she, for one, could endure that" (Larsen 191-192). Not two pages later, Clare unexpectedly shows up at Irene's door. Larsen writes, "Looking at the woman before her, Irene Redfield had a sudden inexplicable onrush of affectionate feeling. Reaching out, she grasped Clare's two hands in her own and cried with something like awe in her voice: 'Dear God! But aren't you lovely, Clare!'" (Larsen 194).

It would be easier, and perhaps safer, to say that Irene was simply being polite, or maybe that she became emotional and lost her resolve to stay away when her friend showed up at her door. However, upon closer inspection of Larsen's language, we see that Irene Redfield, without question, had sexual feelings for Clare Kendry. An author of Larsen's caliber writes nothing in a novel by accident; therefore, we can conclude that Larsen quite purposefully juxtaposed Irene's dual feelings toward her friend so closely together. And then there is the choice of language: an *inexplicable* onrush of feeling, something like *awe* in her voice. One page later, Irene touches Clare's arm "caressingly" (Larsen 195). In this reader's opinion, this is a deliberate use of sexually suggestive language, not once, but multiple times, to really cause us to think twice about Irene's sexuality and, indeed, her inability to let Clare out of her life. This apparent inability to just walk away from her is all the more striking because Irene has no logical reason to want to keep Clare Kendry *in* her life—she's selfish and impulsive, she lives a lifestyle Irene doesn't approve of, and, in fact, the only thing Irene does seem to admire about her is her beauty.

So why, you ask, is Larsen so subtle and discreet about Irene's sexual feelings for Clare? Why doesn't the narrator let us know directly that Irene is lesbian or bi-sexual; why doesn't Irene ever say anything to Clare? Well, in the 1920s, you just didn't write about homosexuality, especially if you were a black writer, not to mention female. If Larsen had been any more overt in her depiction of Irene's sexuality, she quite simply would *not* have gotten this book published. Nonetheless, as it was printed, Irene's attraction to Clare adds yet another intriguing layer to this fasci-

nating novella.

Larsen's Passing is a provocative read. It brilliantly illuminates many of the social injustices that African Americans faced in 1920s America along with bringing to light not only the plights of multi-racial men and women, but the rarely-talked-about issue of these people often attempting to "pass" in white society. Indeed, on another level, Larsen's story also deftly addresses the Whartonesque theme of women of a low social standing using their beauty and charm to marry into high society. Finally, Passing raises some thought-provoking questions about women, marriage, and female sexuality.

Works Cited:

Larsen, Nella. Quicksand and Passing. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1986.

Dear Axel

By Tricia Earnshaw

I hope I don't scare you
with this, but I think I may be falling
in love with you. It's kind of scary to me.
It's not every day you fall in love.
I'm not sure there was an exact moment.
I think it just happened. That's the funny
thing: you don't know you're in love
until you're already knee-deep in it.
I think someone already said that before.
It sounds like one of those corny sayings
people invent when they are trying to come
to grips with something deep. Now,
don't ask me *why* exactly I love you
because I don't know. There are so many
things I could say. It may take a lifetime
to comprehend. You have eyes the color
of Bermuda oceans meeting the sky.
You have the sense of humor
that could make anyone laugh at a funeral.
You have a mind that could span the entire
globe and loop back again. But do these
things define *why* I love you? No. They
don't even *begin* to explain. I think love
might have its own language, separate
from any other language on Earth.
A language that not even *you or I*
could attempt to understand. It's just
there. Just like this letter. It's there for you
to do anything you want with. You could
crumple it up and throw it away. Or you
could fold it neatly and put it in your pocket
to look at anytime you want. You can do
what you want with this, but always stay
true. Yours, Twyla.

Autumn Afternoon

By Jonathan J. Reinhart

Millions of dry and curly leaves,
fallen, piled together,
provide an afternoon of pleasure
in the waning autumn sun.

I jump into the middle,
crawl through the leaves,
rake them again
on top of one another,

bury myself
in a world of darkness,
playfully giggling
until I rake them again,

smiling a child's smile,
enjoying the sun, the leaves,
loving the time with my father,
loving raking the leaves.

Old Man

By Matt Pinchevsky

My siblings and I all have different fathers: my oldest sister Renee lost her father in Vietnam; Jackie was adopted due to her mother's death; my brother Darin's father and my mother had a divorce. This being said, my parents have never raised me to consider my sisters and brother as half- or step-siblings. We are all a family and all African American except for my dad. My dad is a white, Polish Jew from Brooklyn, New York. I believe that God's will alone allowed my parents to meet and create me for a purpose. I also feel that if God ever wishes to show me something he usually channels the message through my dad, Manny Pinchevsky. My dad always used to tell me that I was blessed with the best of both worlds. In fact, I believe that he thinks I can fit in and be able to communicate with someone of any background. Throughout my life, I have turned to my father for his love and wisdom to bring a sense of connection, order, and wholeness in the shaping of my personal self.

Being racially mixed has not always been the easiest issue to deal with. When I was younger, I didn't know where I belonged as far as ethnicity went. But I never felt alone when my father was around. My old man had always taught me to be open-minded to the various cultures in our world. I was raised believing that God looked at us all the same when it came to color. My dad told me that viewing each person as a clear person was my best bet. For example, when I was growing up, going with me to get a haircut would have been a culture shock to any white person walking into an all-black barbershop. For some reason, it would almost bother me that my dad would take me instead of my mom, but I can remember a time that took the worry out of me forever. My dad would usually just sit there, as calm as ever, reading one of his Isaac Asimov sci-fi novels; but this time one of the barbers asked my dad who he was waiting for, and he told him that I was his son. A hush kind of fell over the shop, but my dad has this gift of being able to talk to anyone. In this instance,

my dad knew some off-the-wall fact about a football player that the barbers were trying to remember. I found that when my old man said something people listened as if they were gaining from it. By the time I was eight or nine years old, the barbers were more interested in talking to Mr. Pinchevsky than in cutting my hair.

My father has the "gift of gab," which I've been told I have as well. This makes it easy for others to talk to us. My father's wisdom has always come across in an easy-to-understand manner due to the fact that he was an elementary school teacher for seventeen years. I'd like to think that all of my dad's knowledge came from his father, my grandpa Harry Pinchevsky. My grandpa, in my eyes, was a big part of how I was shaped into a young man. I gathered this from the fact that when my dad and mom were raising me, they always turned to Harry for advice. For the same reasons, when I am raising my kids, I will always turn to my father for the advice I need to be an awesome dad. Although my dad went to the University of Miami for his bachelor's and master's degrees, there is not a doubt in my mind that the knowledge my old man gained from his old man will always outweigh the valuable information learned at the University of Miami.

As far as appearance goes, at first glance, my dad doesn't look like he is almost sixty years old. Moreover, if he hadn't developed an incurable kidney disease, he might even look about twenty years younger. During my dad's tenure in the realm of disability, he has gone from an appearance uncannily like Neil Diamond's to one more like an elder-looking hippie's. From a head shot, his white beard covers his face up to his bald crown where he pulls his long salt and pepper hair into a ponytail. My father, who stands a whopping five feet, seven inches, is who I have to blame for my five-foot-nine frame. I don't hold it against him, but I would have liked to have been blessed with my brother's height of six-four.

My father's overall demeanor can be summed up with a smile. I still think to this day that my dad sleeps smiling. To say that my dad has a zest for life is an understatement. One of my father's most impressive qualities is his legendary sense of humor.

It seems that everyone he comes in contact with finds a way to laugh at a joke or comment that he might conjure up. On the whole, my dad, despite medical adversity, seems to live a virtually stress-free life, which he tries to instill in me as well. My old man always says, "It beats a sharp stick in the eye," which translates: "Things could always be worse, so be thankful for what you have."

Emotionally speaking, my dad is very spiritual concerning my life and his own. I thank God every day that my parents have conveyed their religious views to me and helped me maintain my faith in God. My family and I are members of Faith Community Baptist Church, which is an all-black church with the exception of my father and the occasional white or Hispanic visitor. My dad has been involved with the church as long as I can remember. I feel that he is respected on a higher level than most in the church community. The fact that my dad switched religions when he met my mother is an example of his love and devotion towards God and his family.

Remaining on the subject of emotions, my dad is not one to hide his feelings. In my experience, most kids have never seen their father cry. On the other hand, I have seen my father cry a number of times. The most influential moment of sadness that I have ever shared with my dad occurred when his father died and he had to speak at the funeral. It was one of the bravest moves of my father I can remember.

My old man's wisdom stretches from anything you ever wanted to know about music to the information that you didn't think anyone knew. My father has traveled the world from South America to Europe, not to mention various regions of our great country. His travels have enriched my mind with some of the greatest adventures I've ever heard.

My father's idea of me having the best of both worlds has helped me in my travels as well. For instance, I grew up in South Florida, a cultural melting pot, and I have never had trouble being able to connect to any ethnic group. Even in my own family, I can share my love with my most "country" of relatives in Ft. Gaines, Georgia to my most urbanized "city folk" in New York. My two

cultures of white and black have molded me into quite a unique creature that can blend into any environment. This mold was most helpful when I chose to go to prep school for hockey in Faribault, Minnesota. With the help of my father's influence, I was able to thrive there and make some life-long connections with a community that was almost all white.

Throughout my life, I have turned to my father for his love and wisdom to bring me a sense of connection, order, and wholeness. Manny Pinchevsky is a man of many angles. These angles have been created through education as well as many influential life experiences. Although I have gathered pieces that shape my life from many people, I haven't come across a single person who knows us both who hasn't mentioned how similar my father and I truly are. The phrase "like father like son" is not just some silly cliché in my mind, but a guideline for my everyday life. I could never draw a concrete conclusion about my old man, because not a day goes by that I don't think about him or apply his love and teachings to my life.

The Essence

By Jesse Wolfe

Hip Hop echoes in my head
like drip-drop, skip-hop to
the beat; I'm lyrically
wise like a wizard in
ancient times. Hip Hop
is on a comeback. I'm sick
of this wack material that's
congesting the radio; same
thing with the video, monotonous
material. What happened to
the days when you could write a
song called *Milky Cereal*?

Hip Hop, I see a change on the
horizon, connected like Verizon;
hear me now
because the mainstays like
De La, Tribe, Black Moon,
Heltah Skeltah, and Lord Finesse
are on a quest to bring the essence
back to the game. YES!! Like
Marv Albert—that's what we need
to stitch up the weak, stop the bleed,
and get back on track.

His Own Cancer

By Heather Petitpas

Tucked between his long, slender fingers, the white, thin object sat motionless. Soon he began to move it back and forth, back and forth, his calloused index and middle fingers twiddling the white-papered thing in quick, rapid successions.

He looked down at his hand and frowned deeply, lines forming around his aged mouth. He slowly shook his head and dropped the object to the ground. "Never again," he whispered as the cigarette fell to the wet street.

He was consumed by nightmares of her still. Each morning he'd awake at the same early time, before dawn's glistening sunbeams had a chance to break through the trees next to the small house. He'd arise, startled, soaked through with his own sweat, gasping for air as if each nightmare were trying to suffocate him. His pale blue eyes would grow wide, his usual tousled hair would remain stiff from the sweat, and his hand would grasp his heart. Even though this was routine, each episode felt so new and so real. Sleep was never possible after this. So each morning around four o'clock Jack Conaway was up for good.

They had both met at the same college during the late sixties, at the ripe age of nineteen. From the first moment they laid eyes upon each other, it was the basic cliché of love at first sight. They tried to manage their schedules so they had the same classes. They joined the same groups, like the Newman Club and the school's choir. They could not bear to be apart. The two were kindred spirits in a cold, selfish, and chancy world where many people who became a "twosome" were not really meant to be, in a world where many people became couples because of fear of being alone or mere circumstance. Not Jack and Isabelle, though. They were deeper than that.

After four years of doing everything together, they accepted their diplomas, found a place, and moved in together. The early years were wonderful. After the obvious marriage, came the expected children. In fact, they loved having children so much—

needing to spread the true love that they had always had—they ended up with six of them. Eight altogether. Well, if you add the dog and cat, then it would be a total of ten.

Over the years, the children grew, the house received fresh coats of paint, the lawn was mowed, the lines began to form on Jack's face, and the dog passed away. Over the years, the love between Jack and Isabelle only grew stronger; and with each grandchild, with each evening under the stars, with each steaming pot of coffee, it continued to grow. It was a family rich in togetherness. It was a lifetime's worth of kindness.

Though among all this happiness, unknowingly, the hand of the death was upon them. As the couple aged and reached their mid-fifties, the devil's mark grew. The cancer that was growing inside of Isabelle was a cancer that was undetected for most of her life. Of course, there was the occasional coughing and the mildly stained teeth. Her clothes smelt smoky, and so did her hair at times; but that was all right, she could live with those things. What she could not live with was the actual lung cancer, which, once noticed and identified, was too painful to terminate.

It was with each stop at the gas station to fill up the tank that Jack had grabbed another two packs of Luckies, one for him and one for Isabelle. This habit started in their twenties and continued. It was like any other habit, really. Once hooked, one hardly thinks about the routine thing that becomes more and more consuming. This is how it was with Jack and Isabelle. It only takes one occurrence of something to get hooked. So, simply because one day Jack was stressed with a paper for his chemistry class and needed something to calm his nerves, the next thing he knew, he was smoking every day, a pack a day.

All it took was for Isabelle to see Jack smoking and to see how he became even just a bit mellower when the nicotine was running through his system to make her curious if her anxieties could be diminished as well. Her usual nervousness for upcoming exams seemed to lessen with every puff. Her needs were met when it came to smoking, and the same was for Jack; and so they traveled down the smoky road together, hand in hand.

It was a habit that did not cease until one day, many many

years later; Isabelle felt terribly sick and made an appointment with old Doctor Watermill. It was during her check-up that she realized she was going to have to have tests done and x-rays and all sorts of scary things that were foreign to her.

During her stay at the local hospital, she was told about her cancer and how it had been there for some time, the silent serpent of death and sadness, just waiting for the right moment to pounce. Oh, how shocked Jack was. He held her fragile hand all night that night and refused to leave her side. He couldn't believe they had not known. He couldn't believe that nothing, not chemo, not radiation, nothing could save her now.

Her death was quick and relatively painless. But the suddenness of it all, that was what tortured Jack. There wasn't enough time to say everything he wanted to say, enough time to do everything he wanted to do with her and for her. Their children were so supportive even though they as well were falling apart inside. Their grandchildren were hardly old enough to understand what was going on. It was just fast — too, too fast.

The day of the funeral was crisp and cool. Around mid-September, when the air just begins to drop during the evening and the burning campfire smells become noticeable again, was Jack's favorite season. "No better time than any to have a funeral," Jack thought bitterly. And he was bitter. He felt guilty that it was his habit that had killed her. Why hadn't he just enrolled himself in a stress-reduction class instead? Or what about yoga? If Isabelle were to follow his lead on that one, then at least the only thing she would have gotten out of it negatively was maybe a sore back at first from all the stretching.

His daughter Emily, who was having family and friends over at the house after the funeral, knew Jack best. She tried to tell him over and over that he should not feel guilty, that it wasn't his fault. He knew the words coming out of her mouth were true; logically he understood this. But emotionally his heart would not hear of it. He was the one to blame for Isabelle's death, simple as that.

So many people showed up for her. Jack didn't even realize just how loved she was. She was one of those women who

touched so many lives. Face after tear-streaked face came up to him to offer condolences. Then each person, solemn and dressed in black, stood before the shiny brown coffin. So many sad faces—Jack knew Isabelle would not want all this sadness. He wished he could do something to erase all the gloom that seemed to float in the air, pressing down on him. He felt like running up to everyone and telling him or her to smile, to tell stories, to remember the good, not the bad. That was part of the reason why he had decided against the wake. An open casket would only reveal the Isabelle that was not her real self. It would only reveal the sick Isabelle. Jack did not want people to remember her like that. So, just the funeral, and that was far more than enough.

To Jack's relief, the priest kept everything short and sweet. He wanted to simply get out of there as quick as possible. He kept fiddling with his hands and fidgeting from one foot to the other. His suit collar kept itching his neck and the newly cut grass made him want to sneeze. He couldn't have been more uncomfortable. He noticed that Emily would glance over once in a while and give him a small, sympathetic smile. His precious Emily. She was the youngest of six and the most genuine of the children. She was always quite close to Jack and Isabelle, and so he knew that she was hurting almost as much as he. She was strong, though, and tougher than most. She had the same nurturing nature that Isabelle had had. She wouldn't have time for her own grief since she needed to make sure her loved ones were doing all right first. Others always came before Isabelle's and Emily's own needs, and that was a quality that made Jack love them both all the more.

Emily's house was only a few short blocks away from the cemetery, so before Jack could collect his thoughts between the gravesite and his daughter's home, he was greeted by even more faces, many of which he did not know. He would try to muster enough energy to deal with them all, but there were so many of them. After as many handshakes and taps on the back as he could handle, he retreated into the den where the food was. There he pretended to look interested in making himself a sandwich, although food was the furthest thing from his mind. His four sons found him there, with his empty plate and his blank look, and

gave him their own individual bear hugs. Soon his two daughters made their way into the den and hugged him as well. He felt grateful to have his family surrounding him. This is what he needed. His children were the closest thing to his wife. They would help him remember her. That was one thing he and Isabelle had done right. Having many children always meant there was someone there.

After the beautiful ceremony and the heartwarming reunion with his children, Jack retreated from his daughter's house to sit by himself in the garden. The clean, crisp roses brought some sort of comfort. It was there that he had promised himself from that day on that he would never smoke again. The terrible disease that had taken his beloved Isabelle away would not strike again within the same family...

Time wore on. The dreams would not cease. His smoking would not cease. Though it was ironic, he was consumed by such overpowering sadness that the nicotine was his only drug, his only escape from his living nightmare. It wasn't until the rainy night in town when he saw a young woman smoking by the curb—a young woman who looked just like his Isabelle, same face, same sad smile—that he could really quit.

He noticed her on the curb of Washington Street and Lions, just standing there, alone, waiting for a taxi. She was wearing a long, fitted, silk dress and stylish pearl-colored pumps. Her long dark hair was wavy and free, framing her pale cheeks. She was holding a small black purse in one hand and her cigarette in the other. She looked over at him just as Jack himself was emerging from a taxi to be let off in front of a bar and grill where he had plans to eat dinner with two of his sons. One thing that seemed positive from the death of his wife—he and his children were closer now. The family bond was tighter. He was thankful for that, more than he even realized.

But the only thing on his mind right now was the lovely lady who looked so much like his wife. As she brushed past him to enter the cab he had just gotten out of, he caught a quick whiff of her perfume, and even that was pretty close to a scent that Isabelle had worn.

As her cab drove away, Jack just stood there on the empty

sidewalk and wondered about this woman's life. Was she a mother? A wife? Did she have people who cared for her and who would cry when they found out about how she was getting sick and might not live through the new year? Would she have someone—even just one person—who would think that if only she had not picked up that dirty habit she might still be here today? Jack's mind raced. What did the future hold for this woman?

It was only then, reminded of his everlasting grief, he thought hard for a moment, said goodbye to his love, and to his own cancer. He slowly shook his head and dropped the object to the ground. "Never again," he whispered as the cigarette fell to the wet street.

Mental Hibernation

By Matt Krug

One day you climb
into a crevasse
thinking you are
only staying for
a day.

Then you realize
you might be in
longer,

shivering in the dark,
held in tight like
the inside of a redwood's bark.

Missing the sounds from the world
around you,
you mucked about.

After the winters of your life,
feet warm with anticipation,
you are ready to hatch the surface,

melt new colors
on a snow screen,

blaze new imagery,
heal your mourning.

In Her Studio

By Rachel Mercer

In her living room -
more like her studio -
where her creations soar,

one sees easels with paint splatters,
reds, greens, blues -
every color possible,

dirty paintbrushes
soaking in a jar
of mucky, brown-colored water,

dried paint
crusted
under her brittle fingernails.

Blank-white canvases
lean against chipped,
cranberry red walls.

Heavy drop cloths
blanket the glossy
wood floors.

Her self-portrait
has an old-fashioned appearance -
shades of blacks, whites, and grays.

She sits
on her cold, metal, paint-spotted stool,
staring at the blank canvases, thinking...

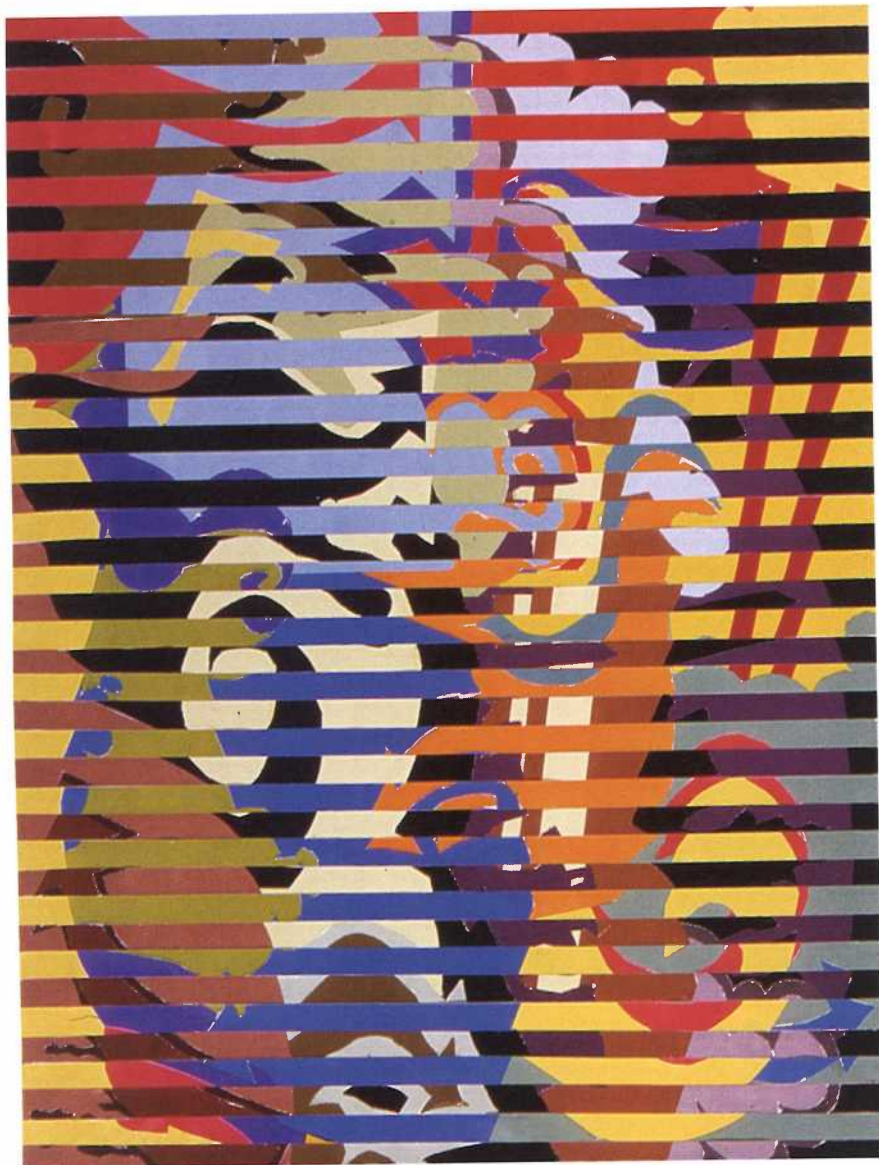
"What next?"



Untitled
Kelly Warren
11" x 8.75"
Acrylic on Paper



Spider
Marshall Daley
36" x 36"
Charcoal on Brown Craft Paper



Untitled
 Ian Coe
 21" x 16"
 Color Xerox Collage



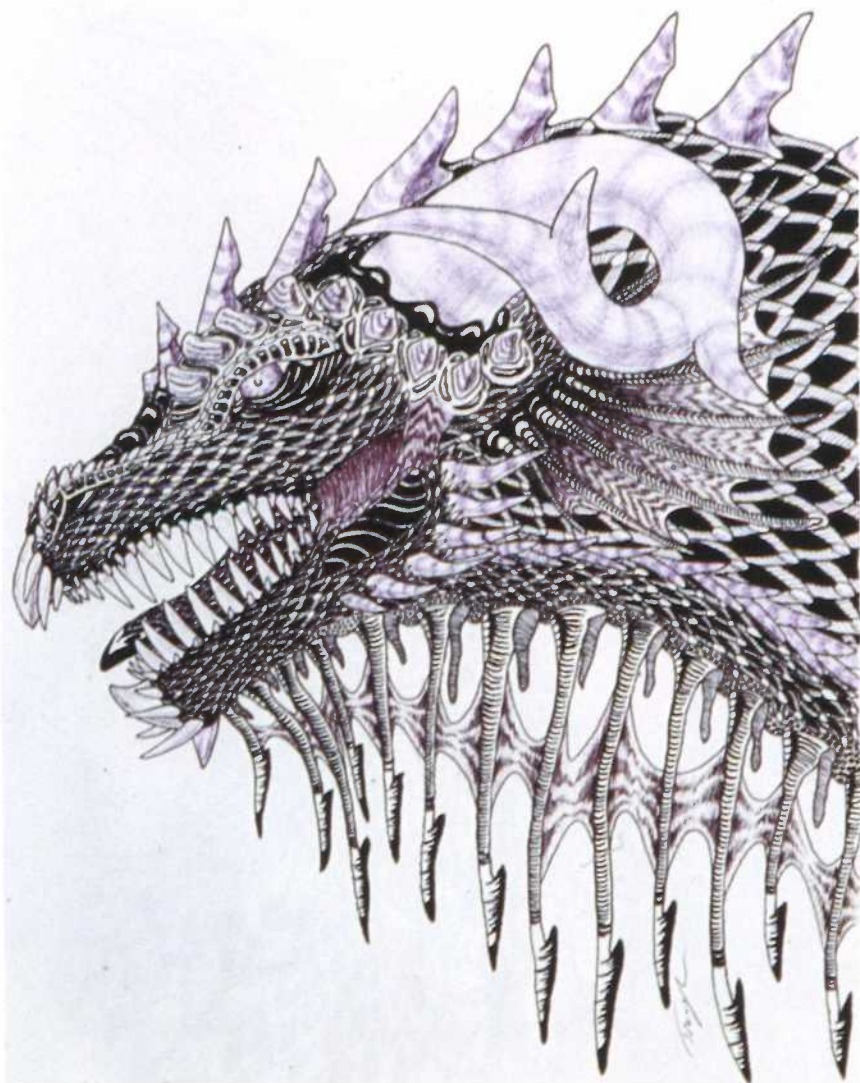
Time Flies
 Tim Barry
 10" x 8"
 Digital Imagery



Dream
Danielle Habeeb
10" x 5"
Digital Imagery



Untitled
Hannah Ruth Taylor
7.5" x 9"
Pen and Ink



Untitled
Hannah Ruth Taylor
6.5" x 8.5"
Pen and Ink



Untitled
Ashley Thatcher
6" x 9"
Digital Imagery



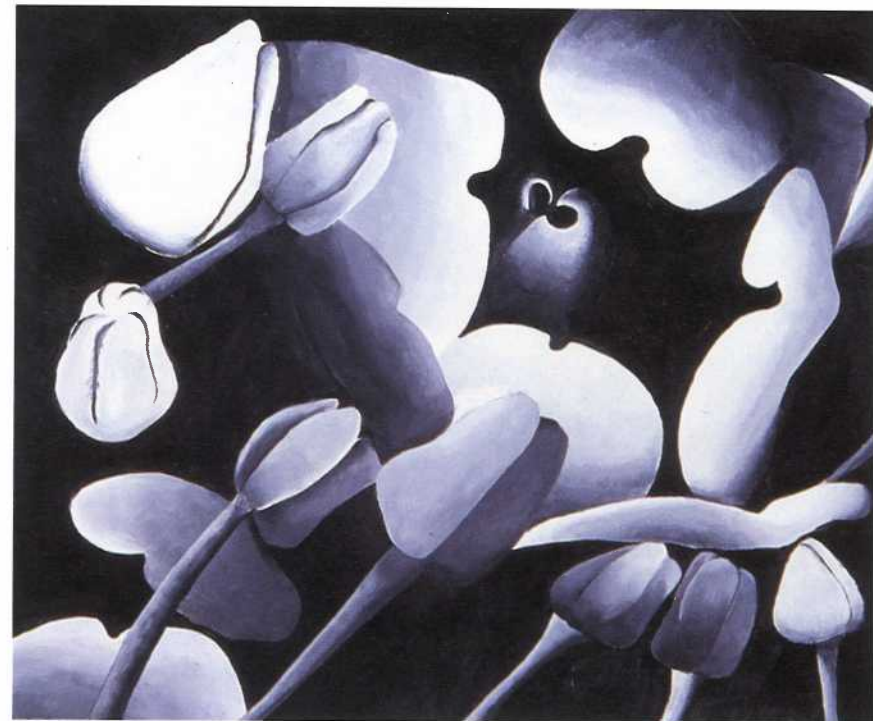
Body Image
Deirdre Leonard
5.75" x 8.5"
Digital Imagery



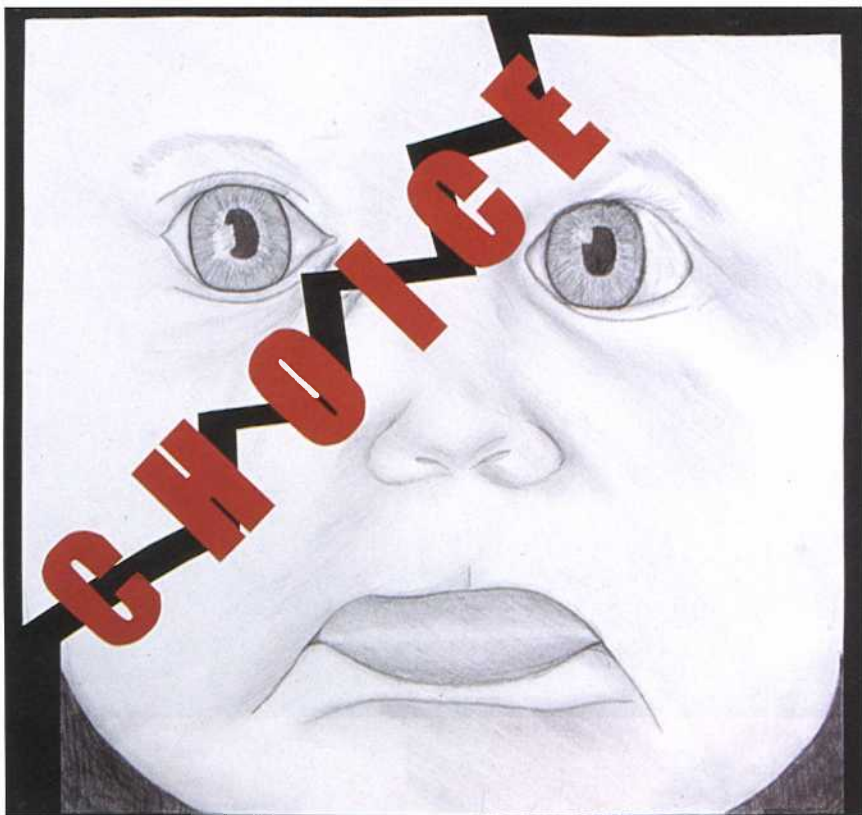
Heart of New York City
Ashley Thatcher
6.75" x 5"
Digital Imagery



Untitled
Jackie Micciulla
10.5" x 7.5"
Digital Imagery



Tulips
Devon Young
17" x 14"
Acrylic on Paper



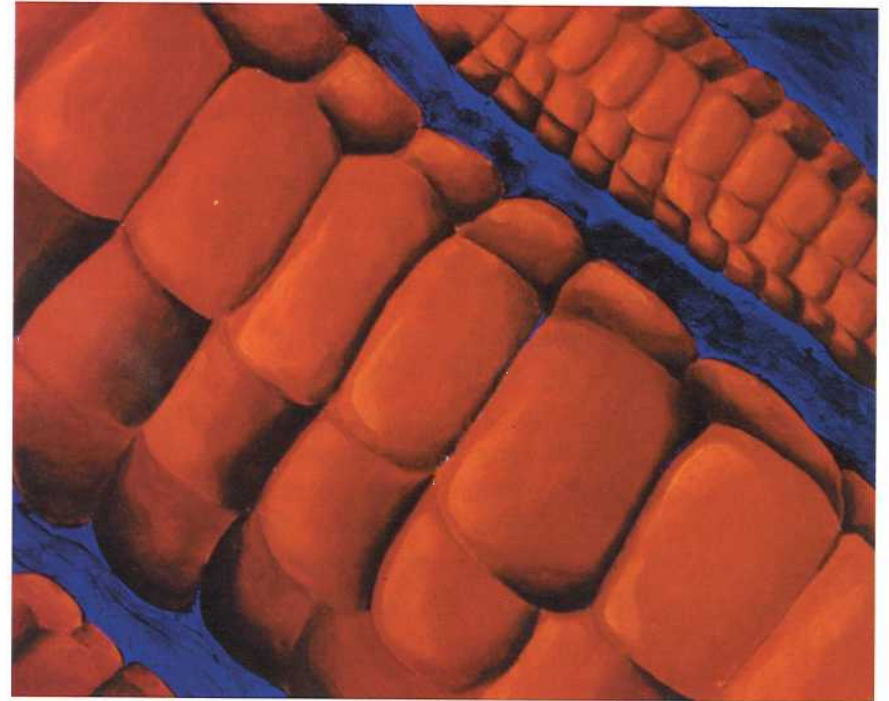
Choice
Kristen Jean
22" x 20.5"
Pencil and Collage



Untitled
Ricardo Graham
21" x 14"
Color Xerox Collage



Your Pearl
Jared Thompson
4.5" x 3"
Black and White Photography



Corn
Devon Young
17" x 14"
Acrylic on Paper

My Art

By Cat Hopkins

Checking the Storm,
Making sure no thunder clouds
Show up,
Dancing the Dance of Death.

Why not try Dropping Axe,
Executing the moves with the
Precision of an artist with a brush?

Why not Circle the Leopard?
Or Circle the Tiger?
Performing such movements,
Showing a feline grace
As I switch feet and stances.

Open hands, Closed hands,
Claw hand, Tiger's mouth—
Variations of the strokes.

I stop moving,
Breathe as I was taught.
Clearing my mind for the next movement,
I shout and strike.

My opponent backs away.
A fury of kicks and punches,
The gi snapping as I move,
I smile.

Bonjour

By Nate Taylor

Teacher Madame sways her ruler like a conductor,
singing songs like Beyoncé *à la française*.
There's a tape playing; she leads the sing-along.
Our bundled voices bounce off the classroom wall
like balls in ping-pong.

We play musical chairs.
There's a girl in front of me with brushed, brown,
beautiful hair, but once the music's complete,
I'll be damned if I don't beat her for that seat.

Le poisson, le chat, le chien.

These class seats induce classical beats
rearranged to meet impossible feats.
The chairs are labeled with words in French.
We skip around them in a circle-like wrench.

The student body, *le corps*.

Music stops; where the *français* is a seat?
Pardon my French; I'm panicking,
don't want to face defeat.

Round and round we go,
the tune high and low.
Feet shuffle from right to left.
Stop the tape; who's next?
A new direction to take it in.

Eating *le chocolat* and *les bonbons*
while singing holiday songs in French all class long.
Playing musical chairs
till I've got to get the *français* out of here.

Au revoir.

Midnight Conversation

By Matt Krug

Last night, I spoke to Jazz,
hanging there like a bass
in an alley.
We started to rap
in time signatures.
I listened to all its glory—
nights spent in Tunisia,
Miles to Tutu,
hearing spirits play in Congo Square,
walking the streets of Lenox in search of
late night sounds of piano and sax.
Jazz told me of a friend who was a Monk pianist,
unearthed stories of Bird's
smoking be bop,
funeral processions in Bourbon.
Just then, the sun seeped through.
Jazz said he had to go, for he felt
kind of blue.

Nature's Walk on Pub Night

By Jonathan J. Reinhart

The crisp, clean autumn air fills my lungs
displacing alcohol's stain.
Nature's scent wafts through the breeze
sending me on tonight's journey.

The drunken raucousness left behind
for sounds of peace and tranquility,
the music of the night forms
the background to my spiritual ascension.

Lights of civilization fall prey to shadow.
On the hill, darkness blankets me,
but I am one
with every stone and blade of grass.

In the still of the night
my eyes close, the scented air
fills my lungs, crickets' song
fills my ears. I am at peace.

Class Conflict

By Nate Taylor

This year's Curry Arts Journal Practicum students have awarded "Class Conflict" a special commendation for excellence in writing.

Timothy Berra was shaking his leg, filled with boredom, as he broke his pencil into five parts. He then tossed a couple of them across the room at fellow classmates.

The teacher, Curran Jackson, who had been writing with chalk on the blackboard, had seen this action from the corner of his eye. That was the last straw. He spun his head around and barked, "Timmy, you're gone! Go to the office."

"Why?" Timmy snapped back, trying to act like the confused innocent. "What'd I do?"

"You darn well know what you did," responded Curran Jackson. "If you want to throw pencils, then go back to sixth grade."

"Throw pencils?" Timmy said with fake confusion in his voice. "I never threw any pencil."

"Oh, you didn't? Then why are there pieces of broken up pencil on your desk?" asked Jackson.

"I got bored and was playing with the pencil. I didn't throw anything." Timmy always had to argue everything to death, even if he knew he was wrong.

"I saw you. Stop fooling around with me and go to the office," Jackson said with his voice getting louder. "I've got a class to teach and I don't have the time to sit here and argue with you."

"Dude, screw you!" shouted Timmy while flipping the bird at Jackson. All of his classmates watched Timmy as he exited the classroom. *Yeah, all the kids think I'm badass*, Timmy thought. He enjoyed that thought and especially liked being the center of attention. He stood tall when he stood out.

Timmy took his time getting to the office. On his way

there, he stopped to open a few random lockers to see if there was anything good to take. In one he found a Texas Instrument calculator, which he snagged, not that he would ever do math problems on it. He could kill time in class by playing games on it though. He opened another locker but saw nothing good in it to take, only some gym shorts and a jacket. He tried one more locker and found a brown paper bag lunch. He grabbed it and ate a bag of Shark Bites fruit snacks from it as he walked down the hallway. He then made a stop outside, by the side of the school, to smoke a butt before he went to the office.

When he stepped outside, he noticed the girl he liked. Her name was Marie Goldenstein, but everybody called her Goldie. She was smoking a butt, too.

"Hey, what's going on?" asked Timmy.

"Just catching some drags off this fag before I head down to the office," Goldie joked.

"Kicked out of class, too, I take it," remarked Timmy. "Assistant Principal Michaels will be happy to see both of us again."

There was a silent pause for a few seconds before Timmy asked, "Hungry? There's a peanut butter and fluff sandwich in this bag." Upon closer inspection Timmy added, "and some cheese and crackers."

"No, I'm all set," replied Goldie as she put out her cigarette on the steps. "As much as I like stolen food, I don't need any of that kind of shit in me."

"You chicks are always worrying about your weight," Timmy said as he took a Capri-Sun pouch out of the lunch bag to drink.

Goldie replied, "Hey, if you had a vagina you'd understand."

"Well, that's not gonna happen," Timmy said chuckling. "Unless I wake up tomorrow as a girl, kind of like the flipside of the movie 'The Hot Chick.'"

"That movie looked so lame," said Goldie.

"Yeah, it did," said Timmy. "You know what looks good though, that 'Daredevil' flick."

"Yeah, I want to see that," Goldie responded.

"Why don't you go see it with me on Friday?" Timmy proposed.

Goldie hesitated for a second before replying,

"Uhh...sorry, I can't."

"Why not?" questioned Timmy. "It'll be a fun time."

"I just can't, okay?" said Goldie. "I gotta go. Later."

What a stuck up bitch, thought Timmy. He knew why she didn't accept the date. He could put two and two together.

As she walked away, a wave of confusion flooded her brain. She did kind of like Timmy. He was funny, and they did have similar personalities. But she came from an upper-class background, living in Locksley, a small, secluded town whose citizens were often stereotyped as being stuck-up. Since Timmy lived in Forest Acres, a much poorer community, she felt like she couldn't date him. Despite that, she felt strangely attracted to him.

Later that same day at school, a kid named Marty Stevens from Locksley was walking down the hallway when he spotted Timmy. He said, "Hey, Timmy, I heard you tried to ask out Goldie. You should've known better than to try to get with some Locksley girl." *All these kids are laughing at me now. They can't do this. Screw this jerk. He's dead.* Timmy's temper reached a boiling point, and without saying a word he punched Marty in the face and beat the crap out of him.

The next day Timmy went with his parents, Edward and Jamie, over to their friends the Cleavers' house to see their new baby. That same day, Goldie was out shopping at the mall when she decided to take a drive down to Forest Acres to check out where Timmy lived. *He's just Forest Acres trash*, she told herself, *so why the hell can't I stop thinking about him?*

She found out that he lived on Village Road by being nosy at their high school and eavesdropping on some kids' conversation. Goldie drove down the roller coaster-like Village Road and eventually saw a sign that said "BERRA" in front of a brown house. Her curiosity prompted her to park her car several doors down the street and get out to take a further look around the Berras' house.

The house was old, small, and only one story, a lot less impressive than Goldie's home. She took a look around the side of the house and looked through the windows. There was dead silence coming from inside. Goldie walked around to the back of the house and noticed that the back door had been left open a little. Since it didn't look like anybody was home, she decided to go inside quickly and just have a little peek. Now most girls her age wouldn't enter an empty house that wasn't theirs, but rules didn't mean much to Goldie, who broke them as easily as a Kit Kat bar, or even the pencil Timmy had broken into several pieces during class for that matter.

She saw a plate of brownies on the kitchen counter and helped herself to one since they were her favorite. All of a sudden, Goldie heard someone walking into the kitchen and she jumped. It was just the family dog, Bear, though.

She then proceeded down the hall to find Timmy's room, which she was most interested in looking at. Goldie found a room that could only be Timmy's because there were high school textbooks on a dresser. She entered and studied every corner of it. There was a "Casino" movie poster on the wall, and on the dresser, CDs by Jay-Z and Limp Bizkit. Timmy liked the same kind of movies and music as she did. Maybe she had been unfair to judge Timmy too quickly. Maybe his background didn't matter. She decided that she should give Timmy a chance.

At this point, she heard a car pull in the driveway. The Berra family got out of the car and stepped into the house. As they entered the kitchen, a look of annoyance came upon Edward's face when he noticed some brownie crumbs on the counter.

He turned to his son and yelled, "Hey, Timmy, what have I told you about cleaning up after yourself? Those crumbs will attract bugs."

Jamie cut Edward off and said, "Wait, dear. I just took those brownies out of the oven before we left for the Cleavers'. You and Timmy were already out the door when I put them on the counter to cool off. But someone has been nibbling on my brownies."

"Then wait..." Edward thought out loud. "Someone might have been in the house. Perhaps they're in the house right now."

Hearing this conversation, Goldie opened Timmy's bedroom window, hopped outside, and sprinted for her car as if it were the 100-yard dash in the Olympics. When the Berras heard the window open, all three of them rushed into Timmy's room to see the girl running away.

Edward glanced at Jamie and said, "Call the cops," before turning to Timmy and asking, "She looked about your age. Do you know who she is?"

Timmy stared out his window for a second at the girl who had rejected him before replying, "No, I've never seen her."

Goldie had driven off like Speed Racer, but was pulled over randomly for speeding by a police officer a few blocks from Timmy's road. Once the cop got on his radio and discovered where Goldie had just come from, she was arrested for breaking and entry.

A few days later, Timmy saw Goldie in the cafeteria during study hall. She approached Timmy and said, "Hey."

Timmy replied simply with a "Hey."

"Do you mind if I sit down?" Goldie asked.

"Yeah, sure," Timmy responded, trying to sound dry of emotion.

She sat down and spoke everything that she wanted to say while Timmy listened. "I'm really sorry for going into your house when no one was there. That wasn't cool. And I'm sorry also for acting stuck up the other day. The thing is... I like you, Timmy. I acted like a bitch before because I thought that I was better than you because of where I lived. But I see now that's bullshit. I know you probably don't want anything to do with me now, but I was wondering if I could try to make it up to you by treating you to an ice cream after school."

Ice Cream? Is she freaking kidding me? Timmy thought. *One minute she's breaking into my house (which was actually kinda cool); the next she's acting like a freakin' eight-year-old. What'll my boys think if they see me out having an ice cream? They'll call me a loser even if I'm with a girl.* Then it dawned on

him: *She's just like me; Jesus, we really are just kids. And I do love ice cream. But still...*, he thought, overanalyzing the whole situation, continuing to be self-conscious about his reputation.

Timmy took a hard second to think and then responded, "No." She looked crestfallen. *That's no stuck-up bitch*, he thought. "You can't because I'm going to treat you to an ice cream after school."

"Awesome," Goldie said as her frown turned upside down and she let out a little blush. "Then it's a date."

"It's a date," Timmy echoed with a smile of his own. For a minute, Timmy stopped worrying about what everyone else was thinking and just spoke as he thought. "So I heard you got arrested."

"Hey, you two, keep it down," yelled the study hall monitor in a thunderous tone.

Goldie and Timmy lowered their voices and continued their conversation through whispers.

Goldie said, "Yeah, and my parents made me spend the night in jail as a lesson."

"I gotta tell you," Timmy said, "I'm impressed—breaking and entry."

A.D.D Analysis

By Jane O'Connor

weeding through creativity,

creating a wise study,

studying my distraction,

distracting my construction.

asking mom and dad
to ease nightly drinking,
being told to mind my business.
I won't repeat their history.

mixing greens with oranges,
believing in weed and Aderol,
concocting my own prescription,
cracking out plus stoning in,
speeding up then slowing down.

constructing a diversion,

diverting the denial,

denying History

Repeats.

West Dennis Beach in the Early Morning

By Christine Stratton

In the background, there's the sound
Of your voice thrown between the waves
Crashing into the sand, into my head
Breaking apart everything we used to be
Throwing the past back into now
Letting the ripples accumulate
Trying in vain
To wash away all the black parts
All the rotten spots in time.
It seems we too are affected by
The moon
Your lies
Passersby.
A jetty forms between us
The river and ocean:
I with my salty taste
And crashing waves
You, shallow, with your calm seas.

Winthrop

By Tiffany LaCascia

The small town always hung
in the shadows of the big city
and barely ever got any recognition at all.

It never had any skyscrapers or Starbucks,
but the water tower always stood just as tall and
the local coffee shop was just as famous to its locals.

The salty taste of the ocean
could easily be found in the breeze,
and the powerful sounds of planes soaring to far off places
commonly replaced bedtime songs and morning wake up calls.

It's very uncommon to find homeless people
or hustle and bustle around the town.
But it is a definite that you can always find
waves kissing the sand any time of the day.

It is impossible for one to ever miss the beach wall,
for its long arms still stretch out and hug the beach,
restricting waves from coming up into the street during risky storms.

However, like all places,
even small Winthrop changes over time
and makes home seem unfamiliar.

It used to be common to find kids
hanging all over the wall looking for amusement;
sadly, now they look to harmful temptations for the same thing.

At one point, there was no questioning
the pride the townspeople had for their beach;
now they question what can be done with it for profit.

Local businesses known throughout Massachusetts
are slowly being neighbored by chains of larger companies
and even selling out and becoming chains themselves.

Here, like everywhere, this is how it is:
change is inescapable and inevitable.
But certain traits stay original
and remind me of home.
The water tower still stands proud
as the beach wall stands strong,
and the smells and sounds stand unforgettable in my mind.

At least there will always be the ocean,
with waves that still kiss the sand at all times.
And while some believe that it is the water that constantly changes,
perhaps it is how we step in and around it that has transformed.

A Lovers' Story

By Ilene Correia

Sophie was early, but then again she always was, and he never seemed to manage to get anywhere on time. The waitress's name was Bess, according to the shiny plastic nametag pinned to her crisp white uniform shirt, and Sophie followed her to a shabby booth in the back of the restaurant.

"Can I get you anything to drink while you wait?" Bess asked politely, pulling a pencil from the tight little brunette bun on top of her head.

"Just coffee please."

She scribbled on her receipt pad and walked away, leaving Sophie to wait on her own. Observing the little diner, Sophie realized that it wasn't much more than a hole in the wall filled with truckers and lost souls. She hated being there but it seemed the only place he felt comfortable. In her high heeled boots, designer jeans, and freshly manicured nails, she looked very much out of her element; and although she had never been one to dote on her appearance, it stuck out like a biker at the opera.

Bess came back with her coffee, asked if she wanted to order anything or wait for her friend. She politely declined, then, glancing at her watch, resorted to fiddling with the salt and pepper shakers.

"A quarter to ten," she mumbled under her breath. "He was supposed to be here at nine."

Just then a stunningly handsome man with fire green eyes and shoulder length jet-black hair walked into the diner. He winced at the sudden burst of light and surveyed the restaurant. She was sitting alone at a booth in the corner, wearing a beautiful red silk blouse, her lovely blonde hair tied into a braid that mingled with her waist. He watched her from this distance for a few minutes as she played with the salt and pepper shakers on the table. He paused a moment, trying to take it all in and remember her just how she was, before he headed over to her to try to explain his tardiness.

"Sophie, darling. I know I'm late, but my car broke down. I had to have it towed and then walk all the way over here." He gave her a little smile as he slid into the booth.

She leaned over and kissed him gently on his lips. "Don't say another word. You're here now; that's all that matters. And it's a good thing too because I think Bubba over there was about to make his move." She pointed to the most surly-looking guy in the joint who took this moment to light a cigarette and scratch his nether regions. They both shared a laugh as Bess headed in their direction.

"Are you ready to order?" she asked.

"Yes, I believe we are. I'll have a cheeseburger club, no mayonnaise or tomatoes please."

"And for you, sir?"

"Me? Oh, just a glass of water, please."

"Okay then. I'll go put that in."

"So, how was work today?" Sophie asked David.

"It was okay."

"Just okay?"

"No, darling, it was wonderful," he said jokingly, poking fun at her nosy nature.

"I was just asking." She looked hurt and that was the last way he wanted her to look.

"Sophie, I'm sorry. All I can really do is complain about the traffic I endured. The Big Dig's more of a big joke than anything else, and even if I wanted to tell you about my day at work, I couldn't break the confidentiality of my patients. What I can tell you is that today I saw approximately three people who are suffering from mother issues, two from post-traumatic stress disorder, and one person who was completely nuts. A full day if you ask me. Now, Sophie," he said, smiling, "why don't we talk about your day instead? I'd love to hear how many precious animals you saved from the cold hand of death today. And I'm sure your pooches aren't suffering from O.C.D. or anything."

She smiled a smile that could melt an ice sculpture in January. He was in love with that smile; he was in love with her. And it pained him to lie to her with every breath.

"Well, there was this cute little cocker spaniel that got hit

by a mini. Fortunately for the little guy, the driver brought him right in. She was so shook up by the ordeal and felt just terrible, but he was strong and made it through the hip surgery. He's going to be fine. Other than that, the same old same-old. We picked up a few more strays, had a riot in the dog room when we brought one of them in; but after that things settled down, and all in all it was a quiet day." Sophie finished just as Bess delivered her cheeseburger club to the table.

As Sophie ate, David began to think about all the lies he had told this beautiful woman in the short time they'd been together. But when he'd met her at The Complex in Providence three months ago, he'd never thought he'd see her again, much less fall in love with her. And the lies had been for her own good, actually more his own good, because he believed that if she knew who he really was she might never want to see him again.

Sitting here in this little town of Stoneyfield, Massachusetts, watching her eat so methodically, he began to ache with feelings that he hadn't felt in such a long time. He had liked his memories just as they were; now he feared that when she was gone, all that he had known, loved, and lost would barely hold a candle to the memory of her face. This was not how things were supposed to be; no one had told him about the consequences of trying to feel human again. No one had told him about the possibility of life after love, or Sophie. How he wanted so badly to keep her.

"David." Her lovely voice rang through his ears, bringing him back to the diner. "Where were you just then?"

"What? Oh, nowhere. Just spacing out."

She smiled as though she believed him, and he listened as she talked about Jade and Jasmine, a cat and a dog she had rescued from an abusive owner and loved so much that she took them home to live with her. He spent an awful lot of time with Jade and Jasmine at Sophie's apartment. They were sweet, and Sophie loved them dearly.

When Sophie had finished her burger and fries, David popped twelve dollars on the table to cover the food and a decent tip for Bess. He helped Sophie put her jacket on and headed towards the door. The arctic blast that hit Sophie as they walked

through the archway was almost crippling, and she buried her head in David's shoulder.

David knew that tonight had to be the night. He had spent far too much time thinking about this moment; he had to live it. He opened the door to the little black sedan and sat in the passenger's seat. As they drove, they exchanged small talk and enjoyed the quiet that this little suburban town gave them at nearly eleven o'clock on a Tuesday night.

They pulled up to Sophie's building, and as she fumbled with the front door's lock, he stood just behind her. The faint smell of lavender soap emanated from her skin, and he just wanted to get to her bedroom as fast as he could. Just in case this was the last night they'd spend together, he wanted it to be a good one.

Once they made it into her apartment, she reached for the light switch. David caught her hand and led her, in darkness, down the short hallway. They found the bedroom and began to kiss. He touched her arm and she squealed. He was so cold, but since this was New England in winter they were dealing with, it came as no real shock to Sophie. He brushed the loose strands of hair from her eyes and pushed her gently to the bed. He kissed her face and lips passionately, tasting her sweet sweat in his mouth. They made love, and David's eyes began to glow against the coolness and pallor of his skin. He rolled towards her, ready to discuss what it was he had come to discuss.

"Sophie, I just want you to know that I love you. And I don't mean that in an unhealthy, obsessive way. I mean that in a *I just don't think I know how to live without you* kind of way."

She smiled under his weight. She was very much in love with him, too. She knew from the moment she met him at that club he was the one she'd spend the rest of her life with. All her friends thought she was crazy, but no man had ever made her feel this way.

"Let me finish, or I might not," he said when Sophie opened her mouth to speak. "Well, here's the thing. During the past three months, I've behaved in ways that you've never questioned, although that may be partly because of me. We started dating in late November, and you've never seen me during the day."

"Well, that's because of your job."

"And you've never seen me eat or drink anything. Not once."

"Well, that's because of your diet," she argued quietly, not sure what was coming next.

"And Sophie," he said. "You've never even seen where I live, you don't know the name of the office building I work at..."

"I love you, David; I don't need to know. We're happy..." she trailed off as a tear slid down her cheek. All that she had made with him was caving in around her. She couldn't think; she couldn't breathe. She just wanted an explanation. He had brought her this far; the least he could do was finish what he started.

He took a deep breath, held it, and then let it out slowly. It was now or never. "Sophie, I love you. I truly do." He stopped. He could just forget it, walk away, never see her again. He was torn by his own shame and the lost look in her eyes. He wanted her too badly. These feelings, they were so frustrating. He took a deep breath, and against all his instincts that were pleading with him to forget about the whole thing, he began.

"Sophie, I'm a vampire. I was born in 1451 to a rich, loving family. At twenty-four, I had a wife and three beautiful children I loved dearly, but something terrible happened. A crazed vampire named Victor was running around changing people and leaving them to fend for themselves. I was walking home when he attacked me. I had to leave everything behind. I never saw my wife, my children, my family ever again. A clan found me and took me in, or else, for sure, I wouldn't have even lasted this long. I've..." he trailed off. Sophie's eyes were trained on him. She laughed.

"A vampire? Come on now. I've heard many lame-ass excuses as to why guys want to break up, but this takes the cake."

David felt angry, hurt, enraged. That is the only explanation he could give for what happened next. He got down on all fours, arched his back, and hissed right at her. By the light of the moon, she could see his fangs dripping with saliva, and she felt something she had never felt with him before: fear. He reminded her of a rabid dog they had shot last summer because he had come after one of the staff. She cowered in the corner, hung her head, and began to sob.

That was enough for David. He felt ashamed, but had wanted so badly for her to believe him. He lowered his back and retracted his fangs. He always ate before seeing Sophie, so the urge was never very prominent around her. He just wanted her to understand. She was the only one since his wife, more than five hundred years ago, from whom he needed understanding.

"So," Sophie began when she found her voice, "what do you want from me?"

"I want to give you something I was never given."

"What's that?"

"A choice."

"A choice? What choice? What do you want me to choose? Whether to have a vampire lover or not?"

"No, Sophie. I want to change you. I want to show you the world. I want to be with you forever and have it mean something. I moved to the United States a hundred years ago. I live with others like me. I've never changed anyone, but I've seen it done. I've seen it done for money, power, and yes, even love. And I just don't think I can be without you."

"So, you want me to give up everything I have? For you? For...for...whatever it is you do with your immortality?"

"Yes, I want you to want to see the world with me. I want you to understand what I'm saying. I'm offering you eternal life here." He didn't know how to react any more than she did. This was all new to him. He'd never been in love with people, just with draining their blood.

Sophie's heart raced in her chest. She wanted so much not to believe the words that were coming from her beloved's mouth. The tears that had formed in her eyes dried up as she slowly took in everything he was saying to her. She looked again at the man she thought she knew and couldn't help but feel anger. She stood, and as she contemplated the intensity of his words, rage began to bubble and boil over. She couldn't believe that he had kept this from her, taken her this far without ever letting her know the extreme consequences that falling in love with him would bring.

"Get out." The words had barely escaped her throat and already she was starting to regret them. But truthfully, he had left her no choice. She didn't ask for, or want, this. She was just trying

to hold onto the normalcy that had seemed to disappear over the last half hour. "If you love me, you'll walk out that door and never see me again." She held back tears, watching him as he struggled for words that would not come. She refused to let him see her cry again or show him any signs of weakness. "Just get out."

Not knowing what to do or completely understanding what he had just done, he dressed quickly, turned towards the doorway, and walked through it for the last time. As he moved along the cold, dark street, he began to think of his wife and his three beautiful children. He missed them all so much, every day. The memory of their faces had flared the darkness of every night since his first terrible one. He had only known this loneliness impossible to escape, until Sophie. And now that his time with her had come to a crashing halt, he realized that another burning image, Sophie's inextinguishable face, would forever join theirs. He thought of this as he walked closer to home, closer still to damnation and the binding sentence cursed upon him so many years before.

Walking Into Darkness

By Cat Hopkins

Walk me into the darkness
but only for a short way.
Sunlight is now memory
and blues will soon be grays.

As much as my heart is with you,
as much as I want you to stay,
you may walk me into the darkness
but only for a short way.

Lead me to the bow of the boat,
but do not set your foot inside.
The boatman's orders are unyielding.
The stormy crossing is wide.

As much as I want you to join me,
as much as you've walked by my side,
you may lead me into the bow of the boat,
but do not set your foot inside.

Walk me into the darkness
so I do not lose my way.
Hold me tightly in your arms
to keep my fears at bay.

Lights shine in the darkness;
or so the prophets say.
For now, walk me into the darkness
but only for a short way.

Before & After

By Nate Taylor

We came out of our mothers' wombs six months apart
and played in each other's rooms as kids from the start,
hanging out, getting into trouble, and playing games.
Sometimes I wish that things could have always stayed the same.
To me, you'll always be that Karate Kid, blue sweatshirt with
Mickey Mouse,
playing baseball in the backyard, chillin' in the tree house.
Now sometimes I feel like I don't even want to stay around
'cause life has broken down the mood swing set on my playground.
Hey now, hey now, they say that happiness is right around the corner,
but this block was too damn long.
I tried to stand strong; my legs got tired.
Plus I got cold feet, had to throw my socks in the dryer.
I tried to stand strong; instead I'd sit weak.
Two ships set sail; now only I'm left floating up shit creek

because that day I woke up yawning,
opened my eyes to the wall,
and hopped out of bed.

It was a regular Sunday morning
until I got the phone call.
Your mom said you were dead.

They say when shit hits the fan you've got to bite the bullet.
But in the race of life I've hung in the back like a mullet.
We used to sled in the snowflakes, but then you sped with no
brakes.
Seeing you dead was more than I could take. I shook my head at the wake
in disbelief; I'm still grieving. The memories of that evening
aren't leaving. I'm trying to find closure or any meaning.

We knew each other before we were potty-trained or even had
teddy bears.
Some say the song must go on, but all I'm hearing is dead air.
We once played outside till we got dirty and had to be rinsed and
washed.
But since the cost of growing up is innocence lost,
the Peter Pan days are over. Still I can't let go.
I need to move on. I've come to the spork in the road.

Your mother wants her baby back like you were ribs.
I want my friend back, back to the days of bibs and cribs,
and street hockey, video games, making prank calls like the Jerky Boys,
wrestling, makin' music, jammin', or just playin' with toys.
But I'm happy we got the chance to travel down that path.
All I've got now is photographs and memories past
which are always good for a few laughs and a smile.
Now I need to keep walking forward, but remember to look back
every once in a while.

I Remember

By James M. Greene

The seagulls swooped and dove, oblivious to the cold winter waters. The beach, though deserted, was alive with the squealing delight of children exploring the storm-tossed shoreline for nature's discarded treasures. The boys and girls were leapfrogging along the shore in an attempt to outdo each other for the perfect stone, which had to be somewhat flat and round. Once found, it was flung with abandonment into the foaming surf with the intent of setting world records for the number of skips it made before settling into its watery resting place. As always, Dad outskipped us, even though he had ten competitors keen on beating his best on our march across the seashore. He seemed forever young when he was with us, and we cherished these infrequent times alone with him before life's obligations would steal him away from us. I remember the look of love and satisfaction in his eyes as he surveyed his small tribe following his footsteps in the sand.

Crashing Waves

By Mike Biffar

As I drive onto the vast sandy beaches
and smell the fresh salty air,
I hear the seagulls singing
while mother earth swallows
the everlasting sands of time.

As I dig my feet into the sand
and feel the brazen sun
beat in upon my light brown skin,
I crack a Corona
and take a sip.

How long have I had the privilege
of having one of Gaia's favorite vistas
as my own personal playground,
my own sanctuary?

I could never be without her,
that vast blue life-giver
who man has not yet given a proper name,
who helps bring everything into perspective.

The smell of salty seas and barbecue
is chased by weed aroma
where time is kept by the color of the sun.
Darkness is coming, my favorite season almost done.

I miss her in the dead of winter.
That thought alone shakes me to my core,
where waves come in fragments
to wash up on the shore.

Thrill of the Chase

By Steven Poinsett

I asked you out
for a date, but
instead you made fun
of my face.
It was nice
to hear your voice.

The end of us?

By Anthony Brillante

I slipped
As I watch you go

Through the front door
Out into the cold streets

Where a yellow taxi
Took you

Away from everything
And me.

I slipped further down
Than I did last time

And I fear

I slipped into no 2morrow.

Newbury Street

By Tricia Earnshaw

Warm-hearted and bubbling, she never sleeps.
With outstretching, wrinkled hands made of concrete,
she provides for the urban culture and desires nothing in return.
Her only sacrifice is beauty; she does not look twenty anymore.
However, she does not mind that her extremities are soiled or her air polluted.
She gives everything she can to satisfy a starving city that hungers for variety.
She is forever changing to feed the demands of a growing youth,
and she supports the weight of the busy society on her battered streets.
They take in her familiar smell of stale cigarettes and yesterday's trash.
They take in her lively night view of tainted street lamps and corner beggars
only to leave with material memories from a fraction of her existence.
Nevertheless, her goal is happiness, not for herself but for her children.
They walk through her establishments unknowing it is a privilege.
When will the generosity be returned with a mere *thank you*?

Epiphany

By Adnan Rizvanbegovic

Growing up, I was taught that relatives were the people from whom I could expect help and support. I was also taught that strangers might cause trouble and that I should never talk to them and should avoid them. However, my first experience of a stranger, although scary, was no trouble. On the contrary, it totally changed my point of view.

I remember vividly the day when I moved with my family to a new apartment in my hometown, Sarajevo. I was eleven years old, too young to know anything about the way that strangers become friends. This new apartment was, indeed, very nicely decorated. It was a beautiful, sunny, six-room suite in a huge building made of brick and stone. In the kitchen, with a marble floor, all the appliances were modern, and there was a big boiler with hot water. My family had bought nice modern furniture for the bedroom I was sharing with my younger brother. Since we had just moved to this new area, I did not know anybody in the building; I was a little bit scared to go out by myself in the beginning. Everything seemed to be fine...mostly everything.

Coming home one day from school, relaxed, on a beautiful, sunny Friday afternoon, almost in a weekend mood, I went into a store near our building to get some ice cream. In my wallet, I had some money left that my grandmother had given me when she visited us. I assumed that amount of money would be sufficient to get my favorite dessert. So, overjoyed, I grabbed a chocolate-vanilla ice pack and went to the counter. I enthusiastically looked at a cashier, a young, pretty woman with curly dark blond hair and a sweet smile, and handed her my money. I was amazed by her beauty, watching her, I do not know for how long, yet not hearing that she requested more money for my ice cream until the rise of her lovely voice blew away my teenage bubble-dream and put me back in reality. I realized that my wallet was empty and that I had already given her all the cash I had. I desperately looked at her smiling face, shrugged my shoulders, and showed

that I did not have any money left. Just then a dark black shade covered one part of my face. I thought a thunderstorm was coming.

This thought was immediately denied by the rotten smell that was neither coming from the ice cream that was slowly melting from the warmth of my hands, nor from the cashier, who was wearing a tempting perfume. A strong, deep voice asked me politely, "Do you need change, young man?" Turning my head to the left, I saw a tall man, perhaps in his mid-sixties, wearing a thick, chest-long black beard. His long dark hair was slightly visible under a woolen hat, which was covering his pierced ears. The man's old, torn clothing, dirty, muddy shoes, and bad smell made him seem scary. My recently smiling face immediately turned pale. I had an odd feeling that my heart had stopped pounding. I felt I was losing consciousness. However, I managed to stay on my weak, shaking legs. I had never seen such a weird person in my life. Slowly, I stepped back, sobbing like a little, threatened child, and intentionally dropped the ice cream on the floor. I rapidly turned and ran away.

Several days later, I realized that the man I had seen in the store was living in the basement of our building. He lived by himself without any family or friends. Everyone avoided him. The people were either scared of him or just unwilling to talk to him due to his outward appearance. I, too, stayed away from him because he was for me a huge, unexplored, scary creature.

Several years later, when the horrible war started in Sarajevo and we were frightened of losing our own lives in the chaos, one person, unknown to us neighbors, opened his heart and soul. It was the individual who had no relatives, family, or friends, the man I had met in the store. During the brutal period of the war, he suddenly appeared to be one of us. All neighbors in our building had become one society and one community. We helped each other during our dreadful times. Our newcomer played a significant role. When we needed housing, he offered his own well-sheltered apartment for children and women. Suddenly he appeared shaved and nicely dressed. I would never have guessed that the weird stranger in the store could one day be our own rescuer.

Time changed us all. The person he used to be, with nobody around him, all of the sudden became our best friend. He acted as a friend and he accepted us, and we, in turn, accepted him as our relative and friend. This unusual experience totally changed my opinion about strangers and apparently weird people. It helped me understand, accept, and value all people the way they are and not judge their looks, outward appearance, and the fact that they are strangers.

Beginning's End

By Mike Biffar

My time here has ended.
This task has run its course—
six years of struggle, work, and success,
some of my experiences cursed
while others are greatly blessed.

What knowledge do I have to give?
From the boot soles of the steps I leave behind,
I have grown physically and mentally
to better my inner mind.

From eighteen to twenty-four,
my mind and heart have focused on this task.
My thoughts now run fluid
so as to fit in any cup or glass.

I began as a boy,
confused, angry, and in pain.
I came out as a young man
whose clouds have cleared.
I have found my way out of the rain.

So how will I conclude this verse
of introspect, reflection, and time?
Respect and be respected,
give and be forgiven,
have pride in your successes
until the end of time.

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